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TO : Department of State
 DEPT PASS: MEXICO, SAN SALVADOR, MANAGUA, TEGUCIGALPA,
 SAN JOSE, USCINCSO
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TAGS: GT, PINS, SHUM, PORS

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA DATE: March 1, 1977

SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Political Violence and Human Rights: January 1977

REF :

SECRET

SUMMARY: The three-month year-end lull came to an end in January as the number of reported incidents of probable political violence rose to 29. The EGP sent a communique to the Guatemalan press in which they described their various activities over the past two and one-half months, including the burning of six sugar plantations on the south coast and the murder of two military commissioners in El Quiché. They also charged the Army with using Israeli-made Aravas to bomb poor peasants in Chiquimula. Recent personnel changes in the Army may lead to more efficient Corps of Detectives, and a more vigorous campaign by the Army against the EGP in El Quiché. End Summary.

Following three relatively peaceful months at the end of 1976 (in both October and December only 15 incidents were reported), the number of incidents of probable political violence rose to 29 in January, including 19 killings. This figure, however, is still well below the more turbulent period in the middle of 1976 when the number of incidents rose into the 40's on three occasions.

As usual this month's report centers around the EGP.

In January the EGP was responsible for seven incidents including two killings. In addition, as many as seven people may have been killed because they were suspected of being either EGP members or supporters.

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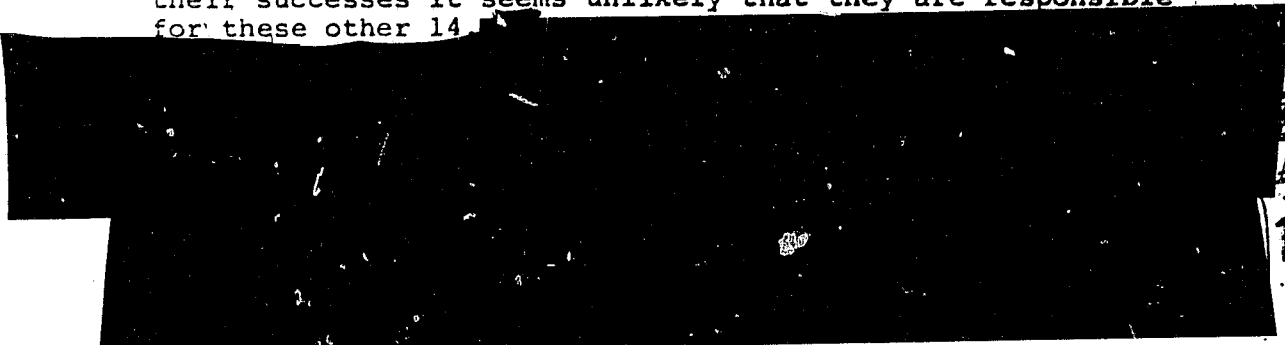
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The major EGP news comes from a three-page EGP document sent on January 31 to the leading Guatemala City newspapers. In the first part of the document the EGP credits their Luis Turcios Lima division, which operates on the south coast, with responsibility for the burning of six sugarcane plantations in the Departments of Escuintla and Suchitepéquez on January 30. Among the fincas burned were two belonging to Dr. Carlos García Bauer, a former Guatemalan foreign minister and member of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, and one belonging to Ramón Campollo, an uncle of Vice Minister of Agriculture Pablo Campollo.

The burnings, says the EGP document, were in protest against the low wages paid to campesinos on the sugar fincas and against the continuing wave of repression by the government on the south coast. (In November the EGP burned 10 aircraft used in pesticide spraying to protest the deaths of several campesinos from pesticide poisoning.)

The EGP admission of responsibility accounts for only six of the 20 fincas burned during January (there have been more in February). In view of the EGP's normal willingness to announce their successes it seems unlikely that they are responsible for these other 14.



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The EGP document also denounced MLN military commissioners in Escuintla for torturing and then killing four people. Although there has been no mention of these killings in the press they are included in this month's statistics.

El Quiché Active Again. Turning to the Quiché, the EGP document recounts the November 26 takeover of the Shenandoah Oil Company camp at Xalbal by the Edgar Ibarra Front of the EGP (See 75 Guatemala 8045 and 75 A-152). The EGP charged that the Shenandoah workers work 10-12 hours a day, don't have any place to sleep, have to buy their own food and aren't provided gas masks to protect them from noxious gases.

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The EGP also claimed credit for assassinating two military commissioners and one MLN mayor in Quiché. The killing of the mayor was included in the December statistics but was not attributed to the EGP. The other two murders were previously unreported and are included in the January statistics.

The Right Strikes Back. The violence in the Quiché this month was not limited to that of left against right. On January 20 three campesinos in Nebaj, apparently suspected of being either EGP members or supporters, were taken from their homes

and found two days later, murdered after having been tortured.

Eleven days later a DCG activist in the capital city of Santa Cruz was kidnapped by a group of well armed men and found dead a few hours later, again after having been tortured.

The Army Reacts in the Oriente. The EGP document says that on December 13, a month and a day after the EGP took over the town of Olapa in Chiquimula on November 12, and killed two military commissioners, the Army "invaded" the town. The Air Force then used Israeli manufactured Aravas to bomb and machine-gun the area, and three days later the Army burned some ranches and crops in the area and killed many poor campesinos.

Comment:

The only unusual aspect of the EGP charge is the alleged use of Aravas for bombing and machinegunning the area. (The Air Force has tried bombing against the EGP in the Quiché.) If the Aravas were used only against suspected EGP locations in isolated areas along the Honduran border it is possible that news of the bombing may not be widely known.

End Comment.

Footnotes

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As a final note on EGP activities this month they are now believed, [REDACTED] to have been responsible for the unsuccessful attempted assassination of General Arana's son "Tito" in July 1976 (see 75 Guatemala 4828) and the December 27, 1976 kidnapping for ransom of engineer Juan José Hermosilla, who is still an EGP hostage. (The Hermosilla kidnapping is included in this month's statistics.)

Personnel Changes. There were a large number of personnel changes in the military in February from the Minister of Defense on down. Two less noted but very important changes included a change in command of the Quiché military district and the replacement of the head of the Corps of Detectives. Col. Julio Marroquin Perez, the Army G-2 (intelligence) was named to the Quiché command, possibly the harbinger of a major step up in the anti-guerrilla war there.

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PGT/FAR Kills Two. [REDACTED] a south coast PGT/FAR leader [REDACTED] 31

January, [REDACTED] shot and killed two members of the Presidential Guard. Although wounded himself in the attack, he managed to escape with the Guards' brand-new Israeli manufactured Galil rifles.

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